

ARCHITECTURE.

SOME NEW BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL LITERATURE.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF CHARLES BULFINCH, ARCHITECT. With Other Family Papers. Edited by his Granddaughter, Ellen Susan Bulfinch. With an Introduction by Charles F. W. Mielatz. Octavo, pp. xiv, 323. Cummings, Octavo, pp. xiv, 323.

JOHN WELLBORN ROOT: A STUDY OF HIS LIFE AND WORK. By H. M. Monroe. With Life and Letters. Edited by Charles F. W. Mielatz. With an Introduction by Charles F. W. Mielatz. Octavo, pp. xiv, 323. Cummings, Octavo, pp. xiv, 323.

A HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE FOR THE STUDENT. By Russell Sturgis. Illustrated. Octavo, pp. xiv, 323. The Macmillan Company.

A TEXTBOOK OF THE HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE. By D. E. Hamlin. Illustrated. Octavo, pp. xiv, 323. Longmans, Green & Co.

THE STORY OF ARCHITECTURE: AN OUTLINE OF THE STYLES IN ALL COUNTRIES. By Charles Thompson. Illustrated. Octavo, pp. xiv, 323. D. Appleton & Co.

ANIMAL SYMBOLISM IN ECCELESIASTICAL ARCHITECTURE. By Charles Thompson. Illustrated. Octavo, pp. xiv, 323. D. Appleton & Co.

The life of Charles Bulfinch was lacking in material for a picturesque biography, and those pages which his granddaughter has recently dedicated to his memory are colorless in so far as the personality of the man is concerned. But it is, nevertheless, good to have a memoir of the distinguished Bostonian, who left a noble mark upon the architecture of his native town and to whose labors at Washington, in the completion of the Capitol, we owe a working out of the plans originated by the genius of Latrobe. In other buildings, chiefly in New-England, Bulfinch showed that he possessed in a considerable degree that antiseptic against the ravages of time in any art, the instinct for style. He was born in 1763, and, though he made a brief trip to Europe in his early manhood, he grew up among purely American influences. He was impregnated by the measured spirit of the last century. We find him developing into a sedate and useful citizen, serving for twenty years as chairman of the Selectmen of Boston, and in his work he preserved the same attitude of conservatism which marked his private life. He was not a great architect, but he was assuredly a good one. He never had any systematic training in his profession, and in adopting as his own the semi-classical style of the Colonial period the wonder is that he did not drift into stereotyped ways of design. It was here, however, that he showed the genuineness of his gifts. He had an inborn sense of proportion, he was simple, discreet, as a matter of temperament; and his buildings are remarkable for a distinction which lifts them above the ordinary works of his time. Though he had no initiative, no creative power, he managed to handle the familiar lines of his earlier architecture with so much tact that he seemed always on the brink of doing something new. His masterpiece, the Boston State House, is one of those buildings which, in spite of imperfections, are recognized as landmarks in the history of a nation's architecture. In American architecture at a time when useful men were few, he struck the monumental note, and by his good taste did much to postpone for many years the evil growth of so-called "art" as has since disfigured our public buildings. The better architects of the present day, reviving and creating noble ideals, look back to Bulfinch as a creator of whom they are proud. Among these architects and among many lay readers this present biography will be given a high value as a record.

Serviceable in the same way is the volume in which Miss Monroe has sympathetically celebrated the brief life of John Wellborn Root. He has been known too little, as a man, to the American public. Dying in the full flush of his ambitious plans for the architectural scheme of the great Fair at Chicago, his powers were realized by his colleagues and but imperfectly recognized by the world in general. Miss Monroe portrays him now at full length, a man of imaginative and peculiarly sensitive temperament, but eager to work out his problems with a full sense of all the relations they bore to the conditions about him. An artist knows in his art no nationality, yet to say that Mr. Root was a type of what the American architect should be is only one way of saying that he exactly fulfilled the requirements of his time and place. There were decorative impulses, tastes, enthusiasms, in his nature, and now and then he put them into lasting form; but a survey of his work discovers very few indulgences in either decoration or mere picturesque. What he tried for was the fulfillment of modern needs and the expression of modern ideas. Thus we find his gigantic business structures in Chicago so very impressive, dignified buildings which make the aboriginal seem normal, and render beautiful the piling up of innumerable stories. The secret of his success in this direction was the secret of his admirable work at the Fair—he developed his design from the inside and left it a perfectly balanced construction. The virtue of the Rookery in Chicago, or the Mills Building in San Francisco, is that the designer frankly accepted commercial conditions, and through a judiciously simple treatment of lines and masses brought forth imposing qualities where only fantasticality seemed to lurk. No one has surpassed him in the refined and reasonable arrangement of those hundreds of windows which, we call the modern fragments of wall between, we call the modern office building. He knew all that was required in such an edifice, from the foundation stones and the heating apparatus to the lighting of the rooms and the creation of a profitable revenue. In consequence, he made it homogeneous—made it a work of art. Miss Monroe has written gracefully of her subject, showing the genial personality of Mr. Root in vivid outlines at the time that she reveals the thoroughly artistic bent of his character. A word of commendation should be added for the illustrations. They have been made by Mr. Charles F. W. Mielatz, an etcher who treats architectural themes with a rare combination of art and veracity.

There would seem to be a rather uncommon activity just now in the preparation of architectural manuals. We have received no less than four, all of which aim at instructing the reader in the fundamentals of the art. For the first of these books upon our list, the "History of Architecture," by the Messrs. Fletcher, we have but qualified praise. The plan is a good one. The execution of it is lamentably poor. It was an admirable idea to block out the styles of architecture, even to the little sub-styles, as they were produced by the special conditions of time and that locality, and to tabulate succinctly the various forces which went to form each one. The authors of this compendium propose to enumerate the geographical, geological and climatic facts, the religious, social and political forces, which have to be reckoned with in the analysis of any architectural style. But to adopt this method is one thing, to employ it successfully is another, and this volume starts out with a fine ideal only to end as a collection of snippets. It leaves an impression of insufficiency at the same time that the authors approve themselves capable of better things. Take, for example, their elucidation of the tremendous artistic effluence known as the Italian Renaissance. Under the head of "Religion" our authors give all their space (eight lines), to Savonarola, observing that "in art he tended to the Puritan theory," and that "the Sixteenth century witnesses his power over Michael Angelo." Considering the vast influence of the Papacy upon the Renaissance in Italy, this deliverance is astounding; it is as ludicrous as it is irrelevant. Other instances of critical

fatuity might be pointed out. The authors are unusually lacking in a sense of historical perspective, to say nothing of a realization of the facts of history, and they have carried concentration beyond all limits. They are so brief as to be almost useless. Yet in taking leave of their book, we must commend it cordially for its plan. If the sketchy outlines which it presents could be filled out, the text expanded until two or three volumes were filled, and the whole edited by a competent scholar, students would welcome it as a valuable addition to their shelves. As it is, the beautiful illustrations seem wasted, and the book will only be of service to those who are competent to make corrections as they turn the pages.

There are few if any corrections to be made in a perusal of the study of "European Architecture," which Mr. Russell Sturgis has lately published. Here and there some question of taste may provoke a difference of opinion, but the broad view of the work remains undiminished. In its helpfulness this book is especially strong. It is systematic in its plan, and traverses the field in a lucid, consecutive manner, but it is particularly welcome in the author is his easy narrative style. He has accepted the fact that a history of architecture, when it is brief, must always forego omniscience, and his chapters have the quality of talk, they take the reader informally down the centuries and put him in possession of the broad elements of the subject. In treating Grecian architecture, for instance, Mr. Sturgis devotes a page to polychromy, pointing out tersely but comprehensively the part which color played in the designs of an antique builder. His description at this point is exactly what it should be; there is no citation of formal illustrations, he simply indicates the general idea; and throughout his volume he deals with his material in the same tactful method. It is a method particularly acceptable to the lay reader. It does not confuse him with dates nor does it obscure his mind by a multiplicity of details. It popularizes architecture without degrading it, it is accurate reliance upon professional sources, it is instructive and it is readable.

Mr. Sturgis writes as an architectural student who is also a man of the world, as one to whom the art brings an element of culture, and his work will stand less as a textbook than as a suggestive essay. He is a source of general ideas rather than of classified information. The publishers have provided him with abundant illustrations well reproduced.

Mr. Hamlin's little octavo is confessedly a textbook, and it has the merits of such a compilation. The general arrangement of schools and individuals is clear, and, while the limits of the book have necessitated severe compression, he has told enough to make his brief survey of value in the schoolroom, where a concise scheme is all that is needed by the general student. Bibliographical notes at the head of each chapter will indicate to the reader those works which will complete his knowledge. The cuts in the book are small, but well printed, and have been chosen so judiciously that they are a distinct help. The volume brought out by Mr. Matthews under the title of "The Story of Architecture" is similar in scope to Mr. Hamlin's book. It professes to give no more than an outline of the styles, but it accomplishes this much with clearness and with praise-worthy rapidity. This work also will be useful in schoolrooms.

Mr. Evans' analysis of "Animal Symbolism in Ecclesiastical Architecture" would be more interesting if it were not so long in coming to the point. In fact, the point is never reached, strictly speaking, for, instead of giving a straightforward account of the architectural decorations which are his theme, this author goes to the bestiaries and other literary memorials of animal symbolism, and talks discursively about the peculiar significance of one beast or another. In the long run he wins forgiveness. There is a great deal of curious information packed within the covers of his volume, and, though he offers nothing that the architect might incorporate into his work, he is sure to amuse the general reader with his bits of outlandish lore.

Hawarden, September 9, 1926.

Dear Mr. Quaritch: The regiment of book collectors stands in no need of recruits, and even if books were thin, I doubt if I am qualified to enlist. I have in my time been a purchaser to the extent of about thirty-five thousand volumes, and I am therefore a qualified collector, but, as I fear, no other. A book collector ought, as I conceive, to possess the following six qualifications: 1. A good knowledge of the history of the book, and the first and last, and these are not the most important. 2. A good knowledge of the book trade, and the second and last, and these are not the most important. 3. A good knowledge of the book trade, and the second and last, and these are not the most important. 4. A good knowledge of the book trade, and the second and last, and these are not the most important. 5. A good knowledge of the book trade, and the second and last, and these are not the most important. 6. A good knowledge of the book trade, and the second and last, and these are not the most important.

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